Clarion Review

General

Ravenstone

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Two Stars (out of Five)

Tales of archaeological discovery hold fascination beyond the actions of their discoverers in this novel the third in a series.

Archaeologist Jake Lalonde half Haida and still learning about his ancestry is on a mission to discover the origins of the Haida trickster Raven. The Raven is Jake's family crest and tricksters are certainly at work in this tale which takes Jake and his fiancée Angeline from the Pacific Northwest to the South Pacific. Angeline plans to do her Ph.D. research in Tonga even though it will separate her from Jake who is pursuing his own research in British Columbia. But Jake follows Angeline when the story's trickster evil developer Clifford Radisson threatens Jake's daughter by another woman—the woman Angeline will be working with in Tonga. Jake has not told Angeline that he has a daughter much less that Lee Turner is the mother and when he finally does reveal the truth just before she leaves she's furious.

Readers will be somewhat lost if they have not yet read the first two volumes in this saga since previous history is not evenly explained. Characterization is weak and Jake and Angeline seem ill-matched as lovers. He is far too impulsive she is superficial and their place as hero and heroine does not sit well with them. A far more heroic character is Tolani a Tongan man who loves both Lee and Ane Jake's daughter and does his best to protect Ane when Radisson threatens her life.

Celeste is a shallow would-be rival for Jake's affections and an antiquities buyer for Radisson. Humiliated by Jake in school years before she has resolved to have him no matter what the cost. That cost is high as she ends up ready to incite murder and commits incest along the way—with Radisson. She doesn't know he's her father but he does—and he just doesn't care. The lengths to which Radisson will go to destroy the pair—even murder—are contrived since Radisson himself is far from three-dimensional. He is simply bad eager to destroy both

lives and ecosystems in his quest for domination.

The writing is very uneven with inconsistencies like this: “The sun was blinding when they emerged into an open field. It was growing dark…” Angeline tries repeatedly to use her cell phone which always goes dead at critical moments and then can’t be charged. She also goes out alone at night after being warned about wild dogs but after one incident right after she gets to Tonga the dogs conveniently disappear although Angeline and other characters wander around alone at night several more times.

The glimpses of Haida and Tongan culture are truly enticing and it’s a pity the author an archaeologist herself isn’t as deft with characters as she is with sites and artifacts. Still fans of ancient cultures will find some fascinating insights into little discussed myths and legends.

Marlene Satter